



## UIUC GSLIS Students in Solidarity with AIS

(The following is an open letter written by students from the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. LIS students from around the nation and the world are encouraged to join us in solidarity by signing and participating in the LIS boycott [\[http://bit.ly/1qPJAZA\]](http://bit.ly/1qPJAZA).)

To our colleagues in the American Indian Studies program,

We, the undersigned, are on-campus and online students from the Graduate School of Library and Information Science who stand in solidarity with you and many others in calling for the reinstatement of Professor Steven Salaita. Professor Salaita is, by all accounts, an excellent teacher [\[http://bit.ly/1xWb3xN\]](http://bit.ly/1xWb3xN). The fact that he is not here to teach his assigned classes is a huge loss to you and to our University community as a whole. As students in a profession that advocates for the importance of intellectual freedom, we are gravely disappointed by the actions of Chancellor Wise, President Easter, and the Board of Trustees (with the exception of Trustee Montgomery).

As Library and Information Science students, we take seriously the principles of intellectual freedom espoused by the American Library Association [\[http://bit.ly/1m1HNAh\]](http://bit.ly/1m1HNAh):

"ALA actively advocates in defense of the rights of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment. A publicly supported library provides free and equal access to information for all people of that community. We enjoy this basic right in our democratic society. It is a core value of the library profession."

In our profession, we train and prepare to defend freedom of information in the form of banned books, equal access to information technologies, and the right to free speech. We attend classes, read articles, and prepare policies anticipating such controversies. As graduate students, we engage multiple forms of expression, including controversial speech, that we believe are necessary for a democratic society. We find Chancellor Wise and the Board of

Trustees' statements about protecting student sensibilities and ideas within the University extremely patronizing and demeaning to the ability of faculty and students to engage in critical discussions. We are disturbed by the censoring of Professor Salaita and the colonialist and racist subtexts that mark the administration's recent call for civility and comportment in academic discourse [<http://bit.ly/1opk2xw>]. We see the obstruction of Professor Salaita's appointment as an unwarranted rejection of the vetting process conducted by the faculty of the American Indian Studies program. This violates due process expected of land-grant R1 institutions in the United States and runs counter to the principles of shared governance [<http://bit.ly/YEY9oq>].

As students deeply engaged with information, we believe that the various knowledges that inform information creation and gathering should be respected. We feel that the targeting of Professor Salaita for comments made in a public, non-academic forum suggests that various knowledges and debates are not welcome at the University. This implies that the University does not value the perspectives of students, faculty, and staff whose work interrogates dominant paradigms related to learning and knowledge construction.

The principles on which we stand are not the same as those demonstrated by University administrators in their treatment of Professor Salaita. We recognize that despite the administration's words, they are not acting in your best interest, nor in ours.

We bring attention to the over 200 LIS faculty, students, and practitioners who have signed the petition to support Professor Salaita in the academic boycott [<http://bit.ly/1qPJAZA>]. We are grateful to the many LIS professionals who have engaged with the University to discuss the reinstatement of Professor Salaita and to reiterate the principles of our profession to Chancellor Wise and others in the University's administration. This gratitude extends to the many who feel the chilling effects of the University Board's decision: professors, adjuncts, staff, students, and others who have signed petitions or taken other actions to protect the values of academic freedom at UIUC. Their actions shine light on the path we hope to take together, the path to maintaining a community environment that does not easily fall silent, succumb to uninformed opinions, and rush to reactionary decisions. We hope that other LIS professionals--students, professors, librarians, and more--will join us on the path toward resisting censorship and collusion by signing this open letter.

We are fully aware of the damage that has already been done to the reputation of the University of Illinois. As current and future LIS scholars, faculty members, and practitioners, we are greatly worried about the effects this damage could have on our professional endeavors. Still, at such a crucial time as this, we wish to stress our own scholarly stance and voice our dedication to the moral and ethical tenets of our profession--the freedom to express and to receive viewpoints, especially those that have been deemed controversial and unacceptable by those in positions of power and authority.

As graduate students committed to intellectual freedom, we write in full support of you and other members of the University of Illinois community who have been negatively impacted by the administration's rash and ill-considered actions. We join our colleagues in academia and professional library circles around the globe, who have already affirmed their conviction in our shared values. In the calling on Chancellor Wise, President Easter, and the Board of Trustees to reinstate Professor Salaita, we add our voices to theirs.

We are all here for you.

In solidarity,

1. Melissa Villa-Nicholas, PhD Student, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
2. Melissa I. Cardenas-Dow, CAS Student, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
3. Sveta Stoytcheva, MSLIS Student, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
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6. Sarah A. Butt, MSLIS Student, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
7. Joe Coyle, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
8. Alonso Avila, MSLIS Student, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
9. Heidi R. Johnson, MSLIS Student, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
10. Ana Lucic, PhD Student, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
11. Brandon Locke, MSLIS Student, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
12. Derek Faux, MSLIS Student, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
13. Nicole Peats, Alum, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
14. Sarah T. Roberts, PhD Alum, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
15. Sarah Crissinger, MSLIS Student, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
16. Lauren Hoerr, MSLIS Student, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
17. Jared Dunn, MSLIS Alum, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois
18. Carrie Pirmann, MSLIS & CAS Alum, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois

Supporters from other programs

1. Floyd G. Council Sr., Alum, Florida State University
2. Rebecca Malone, Syracuse University
3. Ricardo Ramirez, San Jose State University
4. Jennifer Dinalo, PhD, MLIS, San Jose State University
5. Nathaniel Shrage, Alum, New York University
6. Hannah Grant, Tiffin University

Please direct questions to uncivill[is [at] gmail.

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**\* Required**

**Stand with our colleagues in American Indian Studies. \***

Name.


**Institutional affiliation. \***

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